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SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH ASSOCIATES

***CONNECTICUT WORKS CAREER CENTER***  
**NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT**

**One-Stop Profile**

March 1997

Based on a Site Visit Conducted During July 1996

# **CONNECTICUT WORKS CAREER CENTER NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT**

## **One-Stop Profile**

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# **CONNECTICUT WORKS CAREER CENTER NEW LONDON, CONNECTICUT**

## **One-Stop Profile**

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### **DESCRIPTION OF THE LOCAL CONTEXT**

Over the last two decades, southeastern Connecticut—the area served by the New London *Connecticut Works* Career Center—has had the most defense-dependent economy in the nation. During the mid-1970s, over one-third of the region's workforce was directly employed by defense contractors or the military. Sixty percent of those employed in defense contracting worked for one company, Electric Boat, a manufacturer of nuclear submarines. In 1989, U.S. Department of Defense prime contracts in the New London metropolitan statistical area (MSA) totaled nearly \$10,000 per MSA resident. This figure was over three times that of the MSA with the next highest figure—Fort Worth, Texas—and about ten times that of the three most defense-dependent areas in Southern California.

Between 1988 and 1996, a large number of defense-related jobs in the region were lost due to defense downsizing, including approximately 10,000 jobs at Electric Boat. The late 1980s and early 1990s were very difficult years for dislocated defense workers. Not only were unemployment rates high—over 7% for most of this period—but salaries for available jobs were much lower than those generally paid by defense contractors. Only after several new employers—including the nation's largest casino—opened for business in the mid-1990s did unemployment rates begin to decline to their current levels of about 5%.

As described in the Connecticut state One-Stop profile, the challenges associated with meeting the needs of dislocated defense and financial industry workers provided the initial impetus for close collaboration between the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL)—the state agency responsible for providing ES and UI services—and Regional Workforce Development Boards (RWDBs), which are responsible for setting and coordinating local education and training policy and administering JTPA and adult education funding. A system of Transition Centers—co-administered by the CTDOL and Regional Workforce Development Boards—tested a model for the integrated delivery of career services to dislocated workers. Transition centers for dislocated

workers, in New London and elsewhere, served as an important bridge to providing integrated career services to a universal population.

In the spring of 1994, the Connecticut Legislature passed Public Act 94-116, which provided formal legislative authority for implementing a statewide system of Job Centers focused on the delivery of workforce development services to the general public. Under the One-Stop initiative, these Centers—named *Connecticut Works* Centers—are mandated to link the programs administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Regional Workforce Development Boards, the Department of Economic and Community Development and other public and private education, human services, and employment and training providers in order to deliver coordinated workforce development services to employers and individuals.

The two “managing partners” in the New London *Connecticut Works* Career Center are the Connecticut Department of Labor (CTDOL) and the Southeast Connecticut Private Industry Council/Regional Workforce Development Board (PIC/RWDB).<sup>1</sup> As in other areas of the state, these agencies first started working together in 1989 to operate a Transition Center to address the issues arising out of major defense dislocations. In 1992, the PIC moved its entire operations into office space upstairs from the CTDOL Job Center. By the spring of 1994, these two agencies became the core tenants in the New London *Connecticut Works* Career Center.

Several key variables have influenced the development of the New London *Connecticut Works* Center. These factors include: (1) the opening of the New London One-Stop Center during a period of extensive economic restructuring; (2) the decision by the key partners to co-locate in a large modern office complex in the New London marina area, and (3) a strong commitment by Center partners to providing universal access to services and giving customers a choice among a wide variety of services. These contextual variables are briefly described below:

*Because the region is only beginning to recover from the deep economic restructuring of the late 1980s and early 1990s, applications for Unemployment*

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<sup>1</sup> The board’s name reflects its status as a “Workforce Development Board,” while also maintaining the name “Private Industry Council” in order to emphasize the continued involvement of private industry. Use of the acronym “PIC” in this document refers to the pre-Workforce-Development-Board-era Private Industry Council. References to “RWDB” denote the current PIC/RWDB.

*Insurance (UI) continue to draw large numbers of new customers to the Center. As customers come to the Center to apply for UI, they are introduced to the broad menu of services available at the Center. Many of these customers subsequently attend workshops or use a number of the other services available at the Center.*

*Key partners in the New London Connecticut Works initiative established the Center in an attractive and convenient location. By the fall of 1994, both CTDOL and the Regional Workforce Development Board had moved from the old dilapidated Job Center facility in downtown New London to the professional Shaws Cove office complex. Co-location in new space has made it possible for Center partners to increase the level of service integration and offer seamless services to customers. The new location is also large enough to accommodate the addition of staff from new partner agencies, such as economic development and social service agencies. In addition, the region's employers now have an attractive and convenient place to conduct on-site interviews with job candidates and training of new employees.*

*Center partners are committed to offering universal services and customer choice. Many services that were previously reserved for categorically funded program participants are now available to the general public. Also, the Center emphasizes providing customers with up-to-date and accurate information on the range of services available to them. This has resulted in a greater variety of service options for customers and an increase in the quality of vendor services.*

## **ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE LOCAL ONE-STOP INITIATIVE**

*Governance and Management Structure.* According to the governance structure established by the state legislature, policy oversight and administration of the *Connecticut Works* Career Center system are shared by the Regional Workforce Development Boards and the Connecticut Department of Labor. Regional Workforce Development Boards are mandated to assess human resource development needs in their respective regions, plan for regional employment and training programs, oversee workforce programs and services, and coordinate a broad range of employment,

education, training, and related services. Regional Boards also administer funds for JTPA Title II and Title III services and adult education funds.<sup>2</sup>

Among their other duties, the Regional Boards are responsible for approving the annual service plans prepared by each of the *Connecticut Works* Centers in their region. After approval by the RWDB chair and the appropriate chief elected official, Career Center plans are forwarded to the Connecticut Department of Labor and the Connecticut Employment and Training Commission—a statewide policy board—for approval.

A Local Management Committee has been established as a standing committee of the Southeast Connecticut Regional Workforce Development Board (RWDB) to oversee the operation of the two *Connecticut Works* Centers planned for this region. (At the time of the evaluation site visit, the New London Center was already operating as a One-Stop career center, while the Norwich Center was not yet operational as a consolidated One-Stop center.) As required by the state, key members of the Local Management Committee include the local CTDOL Job Center (ES/UI) director for each Center and the executive director of the Regional Workforce Development Board. At present, there are eight members of the Southeast Connecticut Local Management Committee, all of whom have voting privileges. The members of the Committee include:

- The New London Job Center director
- The Norwich Job Center director
- The executive director of Southeast Connecticut Regional Workforce Development Board
- The president of the Southeast Connecticut Chamber of Commerce
- The executive director of the Corporation for Regional Economic Development
- The regional director of the Department of Social Services
- The executive director of the Opportunity Industrialization Center

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<sup>2</sup>Although not required by the state, most RWDBs including Southeast Connecticut are moving away from providing JTPA services directly to offering policy oversight and administering third-party providers of these services.

- The president (usually represented by the dean of continuing education) of the Three Rivers Community-Technical College

The Local Management Committee, chaired by the executive director of the Corporation for Regional Economic Development, operates primarily as an advisory body. Although the Management Committee has responsibility for reviewing and ratifying Center plans, the designated managers of the Center's two key partners—the CTDOL Job Center director and the RWDB program manager—make day-to-day operational decisions.

As in the other *Connecticut Works* Centers in the state, the CTDOL Job Center director has been designated the Center Director for the entire One-Stop center. Despite this title, there is still a clear division of management responsibility for Center operations by categorical programs and funding streams. The CTDOL Job Center director oversees all CTDOL-administered programs including Employment Services, Unemployment Insurance, and Veterans Employment Services. The RWDB program manager is responsible for administering JTPA Title II and Title III grants as well as Federal discretionary grants for dislocated workers.

As part of the integrated services approach of the New London Career Center, several functions are shared by the two agencies. For example, CTDOL and the RWDB jointly operate and staff a Career Services Center and a Resource Library. According to a detailed memorandum of understanding developed by the two partners, the RWDB program manager is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Career Services Center, including establishing staff schedules and supervising the CTDOL staff assigned to work in the Career Services Center. In carrying out this responsibility the RWDB program manager must plan and coordinate career service activities with the CTDOL Job Center Director and the RWDB Executive Director.

*Participating Partners.* In addition to the managing partners—CTDOL and RWDB—other state and local entities are also involved in the New London One-Stop initiative. The degree of participation of other local partners depends in large part on the existence of state level inter-agency agreements. The state agencies currently involved in the New London One-Stop Center include the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD), the Department of Social Services (DSS), the State Department of Education (SDE), and the Department of Higher Education (DHE). Important local and regional partners include the Corporation for Regional Economic Development (CRED), Three Rivers Community Technical College, the non-profit

Opportunity Industrialization Center (OIC), and a private provider of workforce services, Flath and Associates.

These organizations and their relations to the New London *Connecticut Works* Center are briefly described below:

- Throughout the state, the *Department of Economic and Community Development* (DECD) is being recruited as an active partner in the design and delivery of One-Stop business services in association with the Business Services Units operated by the Connecticut Department of Labor. Pending the formalization of a state-level inter-agency agreement between CTDOL and DECD, the DECD plans to outstation four of its staff within the Business Services Unit of the New London Center, where they will assist CTDOL staff in providing comprehensive services to local businesses.
- *The Department of Social Service (DSS)*. Although CTDOL and DSS have not reached a formal agreement at the state level, CTDOL hopes to involve DSS in providing on-site support services to customers at One-Stop centers. At the time of the site visit, an area within the Center had been allocated for DSS staff, but co-location of staff had been delayed by lack of a needed link to the DSS computer system. At the time of the site visit it was not yet clear what role the New London *Connecticut Works* Center would play in providing welfare-to-work services to customers affected by welfare reform.
- *The Department of Higher Education (DHE)*, under an interagency agreement with the CTDOL, provides information on education and career opportunities to all One-Stop customers via its toll-free hotline. DHE also provides electronic access to listings of accredited study programs offered by colleges and occupational schools throughout the state. Local institutions under DHE include the following:
  - *Three Rivers Community Technical College* is represented both on the Local Management Committee and the RWDB. The College sends a counselor to the Center once a month to meet with customers who are interested in upgrading their work skills. In addition, One-Stop partners refer individuals to college counselors to discuss plans for continuing education.
  - *Other Post-Secondary Schools*—such as the local branch of the University of New Haven, Grasso Technical School, and Norwich Regional Technical School—also send representatives to the Center on a monthly basis to offer workshops and counseling to Center customers.



- *The Department of Education* supports services to job seekers including those with substantial barriers to employment. Services available to Career Center customers through referral to service sites administered by local school districts include career decision-making workshops, bilingual vocational-technical programs, educational needs assessment, and career counseling. Adult Basic Education (ABE) is offered through programs at New London Adult Education and Norwich Adult Education.
- *The Corporation for Regional Economic Development (CRED)* is a non-profit economic development organization for the Southeast Connecticut region. CRED also serves as the liaison between the twenty cities and towns of southeastern Connecticut and the regional DECD offices. CRED—which is located next to the New London *Connecticut Works* Center in a neighboring building in the Shaw's Cove business complex—helps existing businesses in the region to expand their operations and helps new businesses become established.
- *The Opportunity Industrialization Center (OIC)* of New London County, a private non-profit organization, has a prime contract through the Department of Social Services to provide vocational training and place trainees into employment. OIC is represented both on the RWDB and on the Local Management Committee.
- *Flath and Associates* is a private for-profit service vendor that has been particularly influential in developing and providing local services for dislocated workers. A number of the workshops originally developed for dislocated workers are now being adapted and offered to the general public at the New London *Connecticut Works* Career Center. Flath provides several of the Center's public workshops, including workshops on job search, resume writing, and interviewing techniques. Although Flath was originally invited to join the Local Management Committee, state policy excludes for-profit firms from participating on these committees.

## **COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION**

Partners in the New London *Connecticut Works* Career Center have developed several communication mechanisms at the local level to coordinate their system-building efforts. In addition, local partners communicate frequently with state One-Stop policy makers in the development of One-Stop systems.

*Communication among Regional Partners.* The Local Management Committee provides a forum in which One-Stop partners can discuss regional workforce policy objectives. During meetings of the Management Committee, local partners assess educational, economic development, and workforce development needs in the region

and advise Center managers about how to address the needs of business and individual customers. The Local Management Committee also serves as a forum for resolving any disagreements that may arise about the duties and responsibilities of the managing partners and Career Services staff.

*Communication among Center Staff and Managers.* Local respondents indicated that good communication and coordination of activities among CTDOL and RWDB staff are essential to providing good service to Center customers. Cross-agency committees have been formed to facilitate communication about issues related to the planning and operation of the Center. Committees have been particularly important in shaping aspects of Career Center operations that involve staff from multiple partners. Committees have included:

- *Greeter Committee.* An important feature of the delivery of One-Stop services in the New London Career Center is the use of a “greeter.” Greeters meet customers when they come in the door, answer initial questions, give a brief description of services available at the Center, and direct customers to appropriate areas of the Center. The greeter position is cross-staffed by CTDOL and the RWDB. The greeter committee was formed during Center planning to discuss the roles of greeters and how the position should be staffed. This committee is no longer active.
- *Resource Library Committee.* The library committee was established to evaluate existing career library resources and to discuss Resource Library staffing needs. The committee has made recommendations for the acquisition of library materials. Both CTDOL and RWDB have provided materials for the resource library, although CTDOL has made the bulk of library purchases.
- *Job Bank Committee.* Originally established to create uniform procedures for entering job orders, the Job Bank Committee has since expanded to give staff the opportunity to communicate on a broad range of technical questions including collecting and sharing job data and using the Talent Bank, which is being piloted in several *Connecticut Works* Centers, including New London.
- *Communications Committee.* The Communications Committee is charged with establishing a practical means for staff from both managing partner agencies receive timely and accurate information. Members have also developed an in-house public calendar of One-Stop events for use by partners as well as customers.

- *Talent Bank Committee.* This committee was being formed to develop workshops and other materials to facilitate customer use of the Talent Bank.

*Communication Between the State and Local Levels.* To ensure that the local perspective is represented in state plans for the *Connecticut Works* system, state policy makers have invited representatives of local sites to participate in statewide planning committees on various topics. For example, even the inter-agency “Statewide Planning Committee” for One-Stop is co-chaired by CTDOL’s Deputy Commissioner for Employment and Training and the Director of New Haven’s Regional Workforce Development Board (RWDB). The executive director of the New London RWDB served as co-chair of the state’s Local Planning Committee, which established procedures for local One-Stop planning and implementation and developed guidelines for funding and certifying *Connecticut Works* Centers.

To support ongoing One-Stop operations, the state-level *Connecticut Works* office within the Connecticut Department of Labor provides regular updates on One-Stop policy and implementation issues to local Career Center directors. The *Connecticut Works* Office also sponsors quarterly management team meetings—with participation by state *Connecticut Works* staff, CTDOL Job Center directors, and Workforce Development Boards directors—in order to promote communication among state and regional staff. These meetings provide an opportunity for peer networking, allowing directors to take compare notes on problems they have encountered in One-Stop implementation.

### **FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS, BUDGETING, AND FISCAL ISSUES**

The Southeast Connecticut Region was allocated a total of \$400,000 from the state’s first and second year DOL One-Stop implementation grants to support system transformation at the New London Career Center.<sup>3</sup> The Regional Workforce Development Board was the principal grant administrator, responsible for \$325,000 in implementation grant funds. The regional office of the Connecticut Department of Labor received the remainder of the grant. State allocations to One-Stop regions were intended to address regional needs to develop the capacity to provide self-service opportunities for One-Stop customers and support other changes needed to transition to

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<sup>3</sup> A small portion of the grant funds (less than \$5000) was set aside for planning the transformation of the Norwich Job Center into a One-Stop career center.

a One-Stop system, such as office design. Although grants to cover personnel costs were allowed, only those costs directly related to new functions brought about by the transition to One-Stop were approved.

The regional office of the Connecticut Department of Labor used its \$75,000 in implementation grant funds to defray the costs of moving CTDOL operations to the One-Stop center; purchasing equipment such as personal computers, workstations, and conference room furniture; and installing a new telephone network. The RWDB used its portion of the One-Stop implementation grant:

- To develop the infrastructure to connect the Regional Workforce Development Board to the CTDOL information network;
- To help pay for services provided by outside contractors, including workshops that are open to the general public;
- To help pay for the salaries and benefits of RWDB personnel providing services to the general public, including assisting customers in the Career Services Center, helping to conduct intake and JTPA certification, providing career counseling, and helping customers prepare resumes.

The One-stop grant also supported RWDB costs for purchasing a copier and marketing One-Stop services.

In addition to the One-Stop grant, other sources of funding have been used to help Center operations. Much of the activity of Center partners is supported from Wagner-Peyser and JTPA program funds. The Center has been piecing together these funds to support One-Stop universal services. One example is a recently upgraded phone bank that now has nineteen lines. Although some One-Stop funds are used to support the phone bank, it is also supported by a Governor's Reserve Title III discretionary grant for dislocated workers. Respondents indicated that the cost accounting and cost allocation procedures they have to use to support One-Stop operations cause significant strains; they encouraged efforts to create integrated financing and reporting systems for One-Stop centers at the federal level. Center partners are concerned about how they will support such services as assistance with resume preparation for the general public after implementation grant funding expires. Possibilities discussed include charging customers for some costs and using volunteers to help customers.

## **DESIGN OF THE LOCAL ONE-STOP INITIATIVE**

### **Evolution and General Description of Local Design**

Although their relations were historically somewhat rocky, CTDOL and the Southeast Connecticut Private Industry Council began to coordinate in 1987 to provide services to dislocated defense industry workers. In response to large layoffs, CTDOL would outstation ES/UI staff at the company to process UI claims, counsel laid off workers, assist them with resume writing and other aspects of job search, and certify EDWAA-eligible individuals. PIC staff were involved in conducting needs assessments for EDWAA participants and arranging for retraining services for workers affected by many of the same layoffs.

In 1989, the PIC received a \$50,000 grant to administer a Transition Center that would coordinate services available to dislocated workers from multiple agencies, including CTDOL and the PIC. As a result of their frequent interactions in connection with operating the Transition Center, the two agencies gradually became familiar with each other's programs and service procedures. Recognizing the mutual benefits to be obtained from a closer working relationship, the PIC/RWDB relocated its offices in late 1992 to a space above CTDOL's Job Center in downtown New London. However the physical facility was far from ideal. The building had been burned in a fire and Job Center offices had suffered smoke damage. The offices had faulty air conditioning and staff described the building as "dismal." However, closer proximity gave CTDOL and PIC/RWDB staff an opportunity to become well acquainted. At that time, PIC/RWDB and CTDOL staff began to discuss coordinating services in a way that would better serve their mutual customers. They also began to plan for permanent co-location in a more attractive site.

One year before the announcement of the availability of federal One-Stop implementation grants, a joint committee formed of CTDOL managers and PIC/RWDB board and staff was charged with locating an office space that would accommodate both partners. "We didn't do this for One-Stop," said one Board staff member. "The pieces happened to come together at the right time. We had been thinking for some time about designing a system for southeastern Connecticut that would include many of the elements found in the current One-Stop." The joint committee decided that the modern and well-landscaped Shaw's Cove complex near the harbor in New London would be an excellent location for a One-Stop. The building complex had other positive

attributes—both partners saw it as an attractive location with room to grow as the partnership expanded.

### **Physical Facilities**

The Southeast Connecticut PIC/RWDB was the first tenant to move into the office space of the ground floor of the present Shaws Cove location in the spring of 1994. In August 1994, the dislocated worker Transition Center moved its operations to the new location. One month later, in September, CTDOL relocated its Job Center into an adjoining space in the same building.

The New London *Connecticut Works* Center now occupies 2250 square feet on the ground floor of a large, modern red-brick building in an attractive and well-landscaped office complex. The Center—identified by a sign above the main public entry as a *Connecticut Works* Career Center—is divided into three major areas. On one side are the PIC/RWDB offices; on the other side is the CTDOL Job Center. Between the space occupied by each agency, and directly behind the main public entry is a Career Services Center, which offers the general public variants of many of the services previously provided to dislocated workers in the Transition Center.

### **Relevance of the Local Design to the Four Federal Goals**

The New London *Connecticut Works* Center has made substantial progress toward the four federal One-Stop goals of providing universal access to services, making a range of service options available to customers, integrating services, and developing a system in which information is used to promote the continuous improvement of services. Many of the specific services available to customers that reflect these four federal themes are described in a later section on the “Delivery of One-Stop Services to Customers.” The following sections are intended to provide a brief overview of the Center’s approach to these federal themes.

### **Universal Access**

One of the most visible impacts of the One-Stop initiative in New London has been the expansion of services available to the general public. Center partners have accomplished this by building on the tradition of high-quality customer services available in the (pre-One-Stop) Transition Center for dislocated workers. The popularity of the New London Transition Center was based on the fact that it was, in the words of one key respondent, “a friendly place to become reemployed—customers

did not feel they were in a government facility and there was no 'take a number and wait' approach."

The important difference under One-Stop is that many of the services that were previously reserved for participants of categorically funded programs are now available to the general public. Services available to all customers include group workshops, one-on-one assistance with resume preparation, as well as access to the phone bank, fax machines, and copiers. As part of its universal services, the New London Center offers customers a range of levels of staff support.

All customers are invited to receive an orientation to the One-Stop Center that covers the goals of the *Connecticut Works* system. The orientation also provides customers with an overview of the education, training, employment, and support services that are either available at the Center or through referral to other organizations. Services available to all job seekers also include a range of services that can be accessed on a self-service basis. For example, job seekers have access to a Resource Library as well as a large phone bank and messaging service. Customers may use Talent Bank software to produce formatted hard-copy resumes as well as post electronic versions that are available to employers through the Internet.

Group workshops are an important element of the Center's universal services. All customers may attend a four-day, sixteen-hour Job Search and Career Workshop, provided by a contracted service provider, that covers the important steps in a successful job search. Topics discussed include resume preparation, networking, targeting employers, and preparing for the job interview. Other workshops are offered either as follow-ups to the Job Search and Career Workshop, or are targeted to specific audiences. Examples of the former are workshops on advanced interviewing techniques and stress management. Examples of the latter—which are usually provided by vendors—are specialized job search workshops for individuals over forty and people with specific skills such as engineers.

For customers who want or need more individualized staff support, customers may receive assistance in preparing resumes from several staff members in the Center. Staff often act as "facilitators," explaining to customers new to the system how to use the automated resume preparation software. In other cases, staff provide greater levels of assistance, particularly for people with little experience in writing resumes. In these

cases, staff may conduct an interview with the customer about her experience, input the information, and review the formatted resume with the customer.

To support universal services, the Center has used One-Stop implementation grant funding as well as funds from other sources. The extent to which the Center will be able to continue providing the current level of services to the general public after the One-Stop grant is exhausted, however, is not clear. Staff believe, for example, that they may not be able to continue the level of clerical support provided to customers. Resume preparation assistance—a services that typically costs \$150 to \$350 from other sources—may also be discontinued. Center management may either begin to refer customers to private providers or to charge fees for typing resumes.

### **Customer Choice**

The Connecticut vision for One-Stop emphasizes that effective customer choice begins by providing customers the information they need to make informed choices about career possibilities. In line with this vision for One-Stop, Center staff emphasize the importance of long-term “career planning” services as opposed to merely “job search” assistance. Counselors often discuss long-term career objectives with customers, helping them to map out a plan for job search and career development, and informing them of useful educational, training, or support services. The Center currently maintains a list of two hundred service providers in the region.

Customers can also access a variety of information from off-site. Examples include toll-free access via modem to the Public Access Labor Market Information System (PALIS) bulletin boards. Customers with Internet service can also access a variety of services via CTDOL’s World Wide Web site. One such service is America’s Talent Bank, which allows Internet users to compose and post resumes from off-site locations. Customers are also able to enroll for unemployment benefits either in person at the Center, or by telephone to a regional center.

Current hours of Center operation are from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Partners are discussing the possibility of offering extended hours of service during evenings and weekends, but there are still substantial barriers to this. Because the services most likely to be of interest to job seekers during off-hours are available through the Career Services Center—which is cross-staffed by non-unionized RWDB employees and unionized CTDOL employees—an agreement with the union would be essential. Until now, however, the state employee’s union has resisted having its members work during



extended hours. Also, because of the Center's open layout, it would be difficult to restrict access to areas of the Center that would be closed during extended hours. In addition, new agreements, would also have to be negotiated with the landlord to provide heating during evening hours or on weekends.

### **Integrated Services**

Many Center services have been integrated and are cross-staffed, including (1) "greeters" at the entrance to the facility; (2) a Resource Library with access to written and electronic information on jobs, careers, and education and training providers; and (3) a Career Services Center offering the general public a range of group workshops, self-assisted services, and one-on-one staffed services.

CTDOL and the RWDB both share responsibility for providing "greeters" in the area just inside the main customer entrance to the One-Stop. The main function of the greeter is to direct customers to appropriate areas of the Center and to address questions or problems that can be dealt with fairly quickly (the rule of thumb is five minutes or less). Especially during periods following large-scale layoffs, greeters are very busy "directing traffic." During less busy periods they can spend more time answering questions and providing information to customers. RWDB currently has been given less responsibility for staffing the greeter area than CTDOL, because many of the questions asked by new Center customers concern unemployment benefits and these questions are best fielded by CTDOL employees.

A Resource Library available for use by job-seekers is also cross-staffed by CTDOL and RWDB. The library is in an open and inviting space. In the Career Services Center, counselors from both CTDOL and RWDB work with customers to develop career plans, support resume development, and provide workshops on a variety of job-search topics.

In addition to integrating services for individuals, New London partners are also committed to the idea of becoming a "One-Stop for employers." The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the Corporation for Regional Economic Development (CRED) have been active partners in the New London One-Stop. Both organizations have worked closely with the CTDOL Business Services Unit (BSU) to help new and expanding businesses in the southeastern Connecticut region with their workforce development needs. This collaboration has been very successful—the partnership has succeeded in attracting several large new employers to the region,

including the Pequot Shipworks, a manufacturer of ferry boats. A recent decision to co-locate several DECD employees in the Center's Business Services Unit represents a further positive step in the integration of services to employers.

### **Performance-Driven/Outcome-Based**

Staff of the New London Career Center use a variety of information to help them improve services to customers. As in all of Connecticut's One-Stops, staff conduct quarterly reviews based on a standardized set of core measures developed by CTDOL's Performance Measurement Unit. These measures, designed to offer a balanced picture of Center performance, provide staff with information that allows them to compare outcomes for their customers with those for other offices in the state and to identify areas in which services can be improved. Some of these performance measures include: indices of overall individual and employer customer satisfaction, entered employment rates, and the average time it takes customers receive services or benefits (see Connecticut state profile for a complete list of performance measures).

In addition to reviewing their own performance on a regular basis, the Center partners also collect detailed information on service providers. Although the Center has not yet implemented a formal system of "report cards" for vendors, Career Services staff routinely collect information on customer satisfaction and job placement rates from many of the training programs to which customers are referred. When a customer is interested in further education, for example, she can receive detailed information on area schools, including the types of courses or degree programs offered, as well as information on entered employment rates for specific programs. Board respondents believe that increased local separation between JTPA oversight/administration and service delivery—what they termed an "honest broker" approach—has helped to improve the quality of services provided to customers.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF LOCAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS**

### **Staffing Arrangements**

As described in the section on service integration above, many of the Center's services targeted to universal customers are cross-staffed. Categorically-funded programs, however, have continued to be administered the same way they were prior to One-Stop implementation. For example, Unemployment Insurance, Wagner-Peyser, and Veterans Services continue to be administered within the Center by CTDOL staff

and managers, while JTPA programs are administered by the RWDB staff and managers.

As described under integrated services, CTDOL and the RWDB share responsibility for staffing the “greeter” area. The Career Services Center and a Resource Library are also cross-staffed by CTDOL and RWDB. The Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) was expected to outstation four staff within the Center’s Business Services Unit (BSU) by March 1997, although the details of the nature and degree of service integration between CTDOL and DECD staff in operating the Business Services Unit had not yet been defined at the time of the evaluation visit.

Staffing issues have, on occasion, presented problems for Center directors. During the first year of One-Stop operation, lines of authority for dealing with staffing issues were not always clear. For example, although the RWDB program manager is responsible for managing the Career Services Center, some CTDOL staff assigned to Career Services would raise concerns with the CTDOL agency director, rather than with the RWDB program manager. Center partners drafted an addendum to their original memorandum of understanding (MOU) that clearly describes the different roles of the managing partners. Under the revised MOU, the RWDB Program Manager was given formal responsibility for the day-to-day management of the Career Services Center and for the coordination of staffing assignments. The MOU addendum described a series of steps employees and management would take in the event of a disagreement. If necessary, staffing disputes can be brought to the Local Management Committee for adjudication. Both parties, however, attempt to resolve any problems in a cooperative manner and at the lowest level of intervention possible.

### **Capacity Building**

Beginning in 1991, CTDOL began a major reorganization. One of the goals of this reorganization was to transform CTDOL into an organization centered on “life-long learning” through capacity building. The vision of CTDOL’s Staff Development Unit (SDU) is that capacity building should encourage staff to become familiar with and committed to long-term agency objectives. Furthermore, capacity building should not be limited to training sessions of limited duration but should be an ongoing process. As a result of this philosophy, the state has been an active partner with local One-Stop sites in preparing staff to operate in the One-Stop environment.

Prior to the opening of the New London Center as a One-Stop career center, many New London partners were introduced to One-Stop goals through a series of informal staff orientations. In the early spring of 1995, New London became the first site in Connecticut to pilot SDU's One-Stop orientation curriculum. Local CTDOL and RWDB staff led the orientation session, after meeting with SDU staff to help prepare them for the training. The four-hour orientation covered topics such as managing the transition to One-Stop, the history of workforce development in the state leading to the "road to One-Stop Career Centers." Presenters also explained the four federal One-Stop goals and the state's "inverted pyramid" principle of One-Stop service delivery, in which customers accessing self-services allow staff time to spend with those who need more intensive services. SDU also conducted sessions for all One-Stop partners on how to develop workshops.

Center partners have initiated several other local capacity-building sessions. For example, eight staff members from CTDOL and the RWDB have been trained to provide customers with orientations to Center services. Many New London Career Center staff members have attended a series of SDU-sponsored "Quest for Quality" workshops conducted by the Local Management Team that are designed to improve the quality of customer service in a One-Stop environment. These sessions covered improving basic communication skills, encouraging active listening and problem solving abilities, and improving telephone service for customers. Because this training was conducted after the Center was already functioning as a One-Stop however, staff persons indicated that although the sessions were useful, they believed that the New London Center had already established many of the best customer practices that were encouraged during these sessions.

Other New London staff members have received training in how to assist customers with resume writing, following training modules developed by SDU. These modules, designed to certify local staff as resume writers, were seen as particularly useful because many of the techniques can be used to support customer use of the electronic resume posting capabilities of the Talent Bank. Internet training also began in mid-1996—most front-line employees in Career Services have now been trained to assist customers to use the Internet as a job-search tool.

### **Labor Market Information and Related Information Technology Improvements**

The New London One-Stop has benefited from state's emphasis on providing readily accessible and easily understandable labor market information as part of self-service options at One-Stops. For several years, the state has maintained a bulletin board service for job seekers, which is accessible toll-free throughout the state by modem. In 1996, CTDOL also began offering access to a variety of information through its Internet World Wide Web site. Through the state's Internet home page, job seekers can access information on state and national Job Banks, get tips on their job search, post their resumes on America's Talent Bank, find information on unemployment compensation, review labor market trends, and find out which career areas are in greatest demand in the state. Students can also access an "LMI for Students" Web site that suggests how to select a career path and describes the types of attributes that employers value most in their workers. Businesses can post job openings electronically and review Talent Bank resumes. They can also obtain a variety of information on OSHA and ADA compliance as well as on wage and workplace standards.

According to local respondents, many of these technological improvements have been very well received, particularly by individual customers. Customers and staff alike have been pleased with the Talent Bank and its ability to generate high quality resumes. Many job seekers in the New London region have posted their resumes on the Talent Bank's Internet site either from computers available at the Center or from off-site. Because it is still in a pilot phase and has not yet been broadly marketed to employers, businesses have been slow to use the Talent Bank to recruit new employees. It is however expected that a larger part of CTDOL's labor exchange function will become automated as employers and job seekers become more familiar with the capabilities of the Talent Bank. As a result, local staff see the development of new labor market information technology-based products as important developments in moving toward an "inverted pyramid" model in which progressively more customers can access services through a self-service mode.

### **Management Information Systems (MIS)**

One-Stop partners view the integration of management information systems as an important long-term goal for One-Stops, but indicated that it has been difficult to achieve an optimal level of integration. The New London One-Stop has not yet implemented a system for integrated intake, although local partners have developed

several drafts of an integrated intake form. Although all partners now have access to CTDOL data from their desktop computers, developing an automated system to share client-level information has proven difficult.

CTDOL's existing mainframe-based systems used for the UI and Wagner-Peyser programs was described as "reliable," and has been in place for many years. CTDOL is currently developing a new system of self-registration for employment services that will be implemented in the near future.

The automated information system used by Regional Workforce Development Boards has proven to be less satisfactory. Although the system was sold to SDAs as a way to combine automated case management and aggregate reporting functions, the report-generating functions of the system are inadequate. Importing and exporting data from the system has also been difficult. As a result, SDAs have independently developed their own information systems for use in tracking services and reporting customer outcomes. RWDB staff complain that they spend many hours inputting information into two separate systems.

Despite the fact that it has not yet been possible to integrate automated data systems, partner agencies can now share information using electronic networks. While previously, staff from CTDOL or RWDB had to walk over to each other's offices to enter data, CTDOL and RWDB staff can now access each other's databases from their own offices. This has proved particularly useful for Regional Workforce Development Board staff, who can now access CTDOL information on JTPA clients from their own offices. Through a local area network, RWDB and CTDOL employees in the New London Center can also share information concerning organizational, fiscal, administrative matters affecting One-Stop operations. Through a wide area network, all One-Stop staff can exchange e-mail with CTDOL in Wethersfield and in other career centers across the state. By the end of 1996, all staff were scheduled to have access to electronic mail and data transfer capabilities through the Internet.

### **Marketing**

Marketing One-Stop career centers was not a priority at the state level during the first year of Connecticut's implementation grant. New London staff attributed this to the state's reluctance to make a "big splash" with a statewide marketing campaign until the One-Stop system is fully implemented throughout the state. Partners associated with the New London Career Center expressed frustration with the lack of a statewide

marketing campaign, because they believe they are “in the forefront” in terms of offering high quality customer service and are ready to let customers know about the services available to them through career centers. As one staff member stated, “We’re doing so many good things here, but to keep doing them, we also have to publicize our success stories. At the same time, however, New London staff were wary about “over-promising” their ability to meet customer needs. “Right now there’s a two-thousand person layoff at Electric Boat,” said one staff member. “When you want to advertise your services under these conditions, you’d better be sure that you can deliver on your promises.”

All agreed that one of the challenges ahead of them will be to better publicize One-Stop services available to job seekers and employers. A small amount of local One-Stop funds was used to produce a brochure describing the services available to job seekers at One-Stop career centers. The next priority is to develop new materials for employer customers. Several staff members noted that in many cases they were distributing materials that were out of date and that did not reflect many of the new services available to employers. With the inclusion of the Department of Economic and Community Development as an active One-Stop partner, for example, the Business Services Unit now offers a number of enhanced services to employers, but few of these services are publicized in existing materials. According to one Business Services representative:

We don’t do enough now to educate companies about what we do. We often assume that they know what we do, but in fact most companies still associate our work only with unemployment insurance. A lot of times, they remember the negative things. But that’s one of the dilemmas that we have. On the one hand, we’re required by law to enforce unemployment insurance regulations, and on the other hand, we have so many great services that we can offer to businesses.

Center respondents distinguished between formal and informal marketing of One-Stops. Informal marketing, they pointed out, includes efforts to market the system to customers on a daily basis through orientation sessions. Center staff have found that word of mouth is also an effective marketing tool—a number of customers have been pleased with the services they received at the Center and have told their friends about what was available. They also pointed to Center-sponsored job fairs as a good marketing tool to reach both employers and individual job seekers. They were,

however, aware of the need to work more with local media using formal marketing initiatives to promote Center services.

## **DELIVERY OF ONE-STOP SERVICES TO CUSTOMERS**

### **Services for Individual Customers**

The New London Career Center uses the metaphor of an *inverted pyramid* to describe its service delivery system. The system is based on three tiers of service: self-services, group services, and individualized services. Career Center staff see as their major function as facilitators—helping customers to use available resources. Self- and group services are essential elements of the system, in order to achieve universal access and maximize customer choice. At the same time, staff are committed to meeting the special needs of those customers requiring more intensive services.

*Core Services.* “Core services” at the New London Career Center are defined as those available to the general public at no cost. Some of these services are available through the Resource Library, while others are available through the Career Services Center. The Resource Library offers customers a number of self-access services, with support from a resource librarian as needed. The resource librarian serves two major functions: (1) assisting job seekers with job service registration and job referrals; and (2) promoting career development by providing customers with information on jobs, careers, and education and training providers. The Resource Library contains reference materials on companies. It also contains materials on resume writing and job search strategies as well as newspapers and trade magazines containing job listings. Hard copies of job listings from neighboring Rhode Island are also available in the Resource Library. The Resource Library permits customers to check out a variety of printed literature and videos related to the job search for two to four days.

Both the Resource Library and the Career Services Center have computer work stations from which customers can access on-line job listings from the state’s job bank as well as America’s Job Bank. Additional services available in the Career Service Center include:

- Assistance with resume-writing and posting resumes on the Talent Bank;
- Access to free fax machines and telephones for contacting employers;
- On-line and printed labor market information;
- Information on and referrals to other community resources; and



- Information on scholarships and career training.

In addition to the self-service options described above, a variety of group activities and workshops are available to all Center customers. All job seekers attend a regularly scheduled orientation session. At these orientation sessions—which take approximately twenty to thirty minutes—customers are provided handouts describing Center services, the Center schedule of activities for the month, and the layout of the Center. They are also told how to sign up to use the fax machines, computers, and the telephone bank. Special workshops are also highlighted during the orientations. All customers who have completed an orientation session are eligible to attend a wide assortment of workshops and seminars provided on-site in the Center’s conference rooms. Workshops and seminars currently offered at the Center include:

- Pre-Employment Skills Workshops
- Vocational Exploration
- Four-Day Job Search and Career Workshop
- Managing Job Loss Seminars
- Interviewing Techniques
- Advanced Interviewing Techniques
- Resume and Cover Letter Preparation
- Job Search for Persons over Forty: Overcoming Age Barriers
- Specialized Workshops (e.g., for engineers, computer technicians)
- Entrepreneurship Seminars
- Education Seminars and Fairs.

Many of these workshops were originally designed to be part of a comprehensive menu of services available to participants eligible for categorical programs as part of an individual training and reemployment plan. Currently, however, all of the workshops and seminars offered on-site are open to all customers, regardless of their eligibility for categorically funded services. In addition to the services offered on-site, staff also refer customers with substantial employment barriers to programs offered through the state’s Department of Education. These programs include:

- Career Decision-Making Workshops
- Bilingual Vocational-Technical Programs
- Educational Needs Assessment

- Career Counseling
- Adult Basic Education (ABE) through New London Adult Education and Norwich Adult Education programs
- English as a Second Language (ESL)
- General Equivalency Diploma (GED).

Several post-secondary schools—including a local branch of the University of New Haven, Three Rivers Community Technical College, Grasso Technical School, and Norwich Regional Technical School—also come to the Center on a monthly basis to offer workshops and counseling to Center customers. All Center customers also have access to the Department of Higher Education’s education and career opportunities hotline.

*Non-Core Services.* Although Center staff attempt to offer an array of universal services, some specialized services are available only to customers funded under specific categorical programs. For customers qualifying for these programs, available services include an individual assessment of basic skills, interests, and aptitudes and development of a job search or training plan. Other services include tuition assistance in approved training, career interest matching, financial aid counseling, and continuing individualized job search assistance. Some of these services are briefly described below.

- *Assessment and Testing.* Center staff use the Connecticut Competency System (CCS) and a variety of interest and career exploration inventories to help JTPA-eligible customers develop an individualized training or education plan.
- *Case Management.* Case management services are available to all customers eligible for Veterans’ Employment and Training Services, Worker Profiling and Reemployment Services, and JTPA services.
- *Counseling.* Counseling on job and career issues is available by appointment. These services may be available to non-categorically funded customers depending on the demand for these services.
- *Relocation Assistance.* Relocation assistance is available to dislocated workers through the Trade Adjustment Act (TAA) and JTPA Title III.
- *Transition Assistance Program (TAPS).* As part of the TAPS program for veterans, Veteran’s Representative from the New London and Norwich Centers offer a two-day workshop every month for enlisted men and women at the U.S. Submarine Naval Base in Groton. The program is intended to help military service personnel manage stress

related to the job search and job development process during the transition to civilian employment.

### **Services for Employer Customers**

As part of CTDOL's reorganization, Business Services Units were established in nine regions of Connecticut in 1992. Although CTDOL staffs Business Services Units (BSU), Business Service staff have forged close alliances with the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) and the Regional Workforce Development Boards under the One-Stop system. Business Services staff place a strong emphasis on providing services appropriate to the needs of their employer customers. Through their inter-agency alliances, Business Services Units hope to become One-Stop "brokers of services" for businesses—offering a range of direct services as well as facilitating contacts for employers with other relevant agencies and organizations.

*Core services.* Core services currently available to all employers include the following:

- *Labor Exchange and Recruitment of Job Applicants.* These services include posting listings of job openings; maintaining current listings on the Job Bank; and providing job matching, job development, recruitment, and applicant screening services for employers for full-time or part-time jobs.
- *Information and Technical Assistance.* Business Service staff inform business about issues related to quality, employee performance, and labor and UI laws and regulations.
- *Apprenticeship Programs.* All USDOL-sponsored apprenticeship programs are available through the Center.
- *One-Stop Business Registry.* In collaboration with DECD partners, businesses can now complete all of their state business registration requirements at the Center.
- *Employer Needs Assessment.* Staff consult with businesses to identify their training and employment needs.
- *Case Management.* The Business Services Unit plans to expand case management services to employer customers. Many regional employers, particularly large employers, have already been assigned a case manager who acts as their principal point of contact at the Center.
- *Employer Seminars.* These cover various topics such as UI regulations, workplace standards, labor market information, OSHA, and using Internet.

*Non-Core Services.* Non-core services available to businesses eligible for special funding and credits include:

- *Workforce Development Services.* These include tax credit programs for employers seeking to hire individuals from targeted populations; customized job training.
- *Downsizing Support.* These services include assistance from rapid response teams, which provide on-site services to address the needs of employers experiencing major layoffs and their workers.

One of the most important services that the Center provides to businesses is arranging for interviewing of job applicants. Center staff regularly help employers to review job applications and conduct interviews both at the Center and at the business location. “Many companies simply don’t have the staff to do all of the things necessary to recruit workers,” said one Business Services Unit employee. “Because of all of the help they can get here with their recruitment needs, we are seeing many repeat customers.”

The new Center location in the Shaws Cove business complex is attractive to business managers who were reticent about coming to the dilapidated facilities of the old Job Center. According to one Business Services Unit staff member:

Employers wouldn’t come to us before. There wasn’t even any parking for them. Employers actually seem to like coming here now . . . It’s a clean and modern environment. We can brag about our conditions here. Not only that, but instead of paying up to \$185 a day for a hotel room to interview job seekers, employers can interview job seekers here at no cost.

In addition to the new physical environment, businesses are also attracted by the new psychological environment that promotes coordination and resource-sharing among agencies. For example, a Job Fair held at the Center one week before the evaluation visit was co-sponsored by the Connecticut Department of Labor, the Regional Workforce Development Board, the Department of Social Services, the New London City Welfare Agency, as well as several community organizations and JTPA Title II service providers. This Job Fair—which was primarily oriented to helping find jobs for disadvantaged and under-employed customers—attracted about forty companies. Staff attributed the success of this Job Fair at least in part to the atmosphere of inter-agency cooperation as well as to the One-Stop’s convenient and attractive location.

Another change in employer services under the One-Stop system is what staff described as a more proactive role in reaching out to employers. Instead of waiting for employers to come to the Center, Center staff regularly read the business section of local newspapers and actively search out new employers. When they are in the field, Business Service Unit staff look for signs of new business construction that will help them identify prospective employers. At the same time, Business Services Unit staff realize that there are limits to how many businesses they can contact. They believe that formal marketing efforts are essential to get the word out to employers. “A lot of employers don’t know what we’re doing,” said one staff member.

## **CUSTOMER RESPONSE**

### **Employers**

We were unable to arrange for a focus group with individual customers at the New London *Connecticut Works* Career Center, but a focus group was held with six area employers. Five employer representatives were from the human resources departments of large area employers and a sixth was the owner of a small contracting firm. The focus group employers indicated that they were very satisfied with the services available to them at the New London Center. Although all of the businesses represented in the focus group posted job listings with the Center, several were not aware of the wide range of services available to employers.

Among the services that the employer respondents had used were recruitment/referral of job candidates, information sessions for employers (e.g., on affirmative action programs), and attendance at a Center-sponsored Job Fair. Employers expressed interest in finding qualified workers for their businesses as well as in helping the government move individuals off public assistance into jobs. One employer located in a more suburban location identified a need to lobby for improved transportation between central city and suburban locations to enable employers to find workers and move people from inner-city areas from welfare into jobs.

One human resources manager emphasized the importance of marketing Center services to employers: “We need to make more people in business aware of the services here. I’m a member of a personnel association that has ninety member companies. The association is currently planning to hold a meeting here. We feel this place is a fantastic, creative, inventive idea. It’s really a nice modern facility. For employees coming in, it’s great, especially when their self-esteem is low.”

None of the respondents indicated awareness of the availability of enhanced services such as customized job training for current employees. When asked if there were any Center services that they thought would be worth paying for, two respondents answered that their companies had their own human resources departments, and, while the Center did some pre-screening of employees, they were still responsible for final screening and interviewing prospective employees. Therefore, they would probably not want to pay for any services.

### **ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED**

The New London Center has been influenced by the four federal goals of universality, customer choice, integrating services, and using performance based measures to improve services to customers. Many services that were previously available only to participants in categorically-funded programs are now offered to the general public. At the same time, Center partners have moved from reliance on a handful of service providers for training and education to a more competitive system that allows individuals a much greater choice among providers and gives them the information they need to make informed choices.

In addition to adopting the federal goals, the state has also influenced the development of One-Stop career centers by emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning. In response to this vision, more emphasis is placed on long-term career planning rather than on simply assisting employers and workers to find an immediate job or employee. This vision is seen as particularly important given the massive economic restructuring that has occurred over the last decade in southeastern Connecticut. The lesson learned is that the workforce for the 21st century needs to be resilient and flexible enough to adapt to continuing changes in technology and in the economy.

As one of the first *Connecticut Works* Career Centers, the New London Center has made substantial progress in meeting all of the One-Stop goals specified by the state. Although the process of creating a consolidated workforce development delivery system has at times been contentious, the Center has made clear progress toward the creation of an integrated, accountable, and universal workforce development system. The decision of the New London One-Stop partners to move to a new location has had several very positive effects. The new Center is certainly much more “professional” in atmosphere than the previous Job Center location. The new facility and location also create the potential for further developing on-site services for employers.

Many of the major concerns during first-year implementation have been effectively addressed. These include how to integrate staffing roles and service delivery responsibilities across the partner agencies, how to use performance measures, and how to adopt new user-friendly technologies as tools for providing services and managing programs. Some areas, such as marketing of One-Stop services, especially to employer customers, are still under-developed. Center staff hope that as all of the remaining Connecticut Job Centers become certified as One-Stops, more attention and funding will be devoted to developing effective marketing practices.

The Center offers a rich variety of services and workshops open to all individuals. However, economic pressures may strain the ability of the Center to provide services oriented to career planning, rather than immediate employment, for Center customers. Among these pressures are the need to help large numbers of dislocated workers find reemployment opportunities and the need to address the needs of individuals affected by welfare reform. In combination, these pressures may force the Center to address more limited short-term objectives of moving individuals into immediate jobs as quickly as possible. Thus it is not clear how far *Connecticut Works* Centers, such as the one in New London, will be able to promote the goals of lifelong learning and career development when faced with the prospect of simply finding suitable jobs for many new entrants into the labor force.

New London agency partners and staff are very proud of the changes that have come about as a result of One-Stop implementation. The New London Career Center has been able to leverage funds from a variety of sources to make high-quality services available to all customers. Even though Center staff and managers have experienced difficulties in learning to work with their diverse partners, all agreed that the One-Stop transformation has been beneficial for customers.